PART 6

Attitudes about computer and Internet access

All respondents were asked about their opinions about the importance of computer and Internet access for adults and for children. Nearly two-thirds (64%) said they think computer and Internet access for adults is very important and about half (52%) said they think it is very important for children. Figure 87 illustrates the overall responses to both questions.

87. Access to computer and the Internet seen as very important overall -- but less so for children than for adults
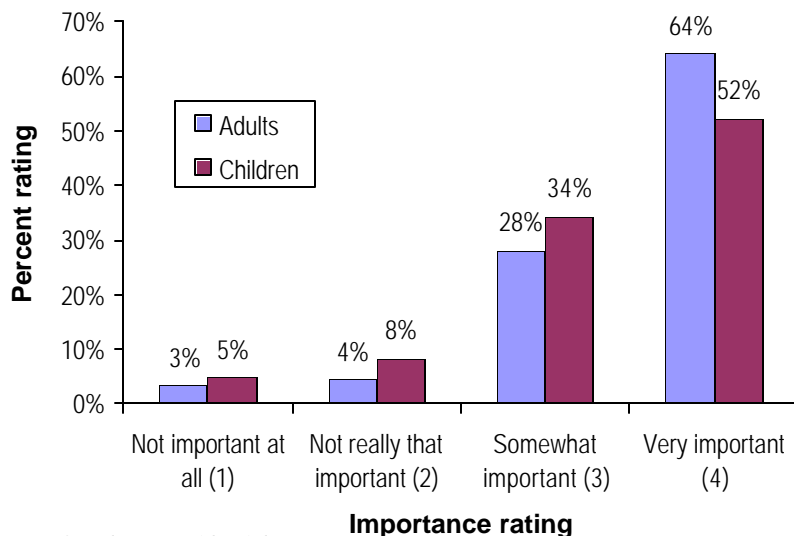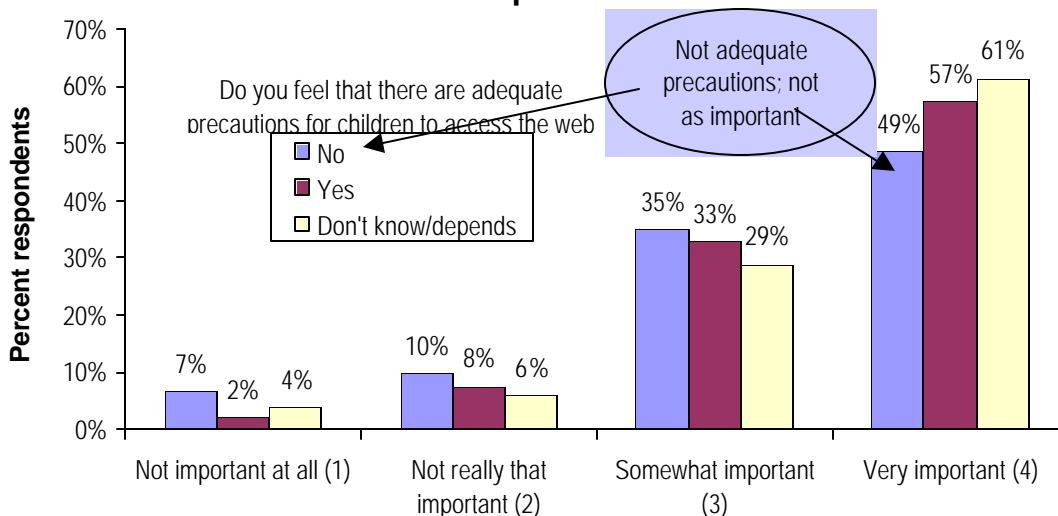

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential

Lower importance rating given children's access is curious, raising the question of whether residents think children's access to computers is relatively less important compared with access for adults – a hypothesis that runs contrary to the public's demand for computer training in schools, or whether it is depressed by concern about potential dangers to children posed by unsupervised Internet access. To explore these questions, three groups were compared on their ratings of the importance of computer and Internet access for children and adults:

- Individuals who agree that there are adequate precautions for children to access the web safely (n=317)
- Individuals who do not agree that there are adequate precautions (n=418), and
- Individuals who said they don't know or it depends (n=235).

Figure 88 shows that those who say that there are *not* adequate precautions rate the importance of children's access significantly lower than do people who believe that precautions *are* adequate or who don't know. This lends some support to the hypothesis that concerns about the potential dangers of unsupervised Internet access for children may have depressed the importance ratings for these respondents. No differences in the ratings of importance for adults' access were found between these groups.

88. People who think that precautions for children's to access the web are not adequate gave lower importance ratings to children's access to computers and the Internet
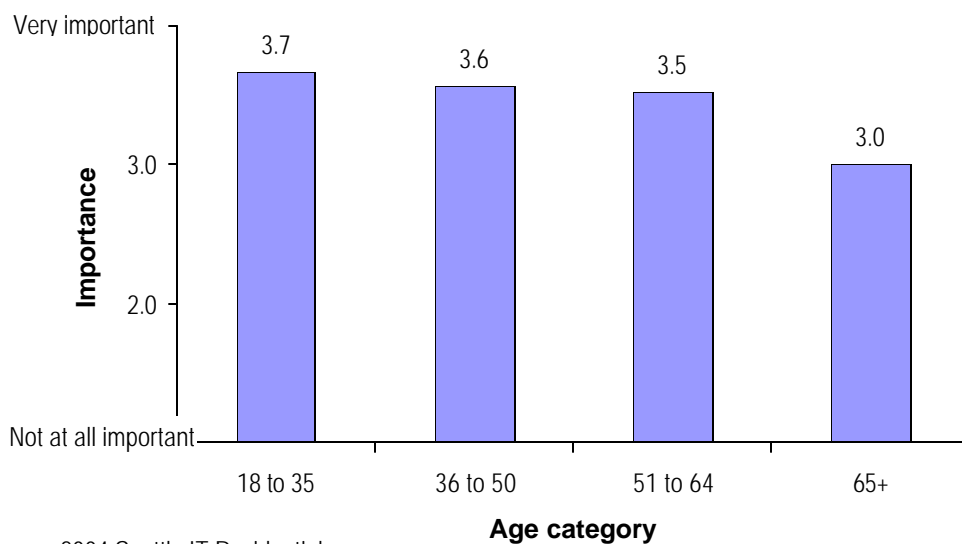

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential

Surprisingly, a dramatic difference in the rating of importance of access for *adults* was found in respondents of different ages, and a much smaller difference in the importance rating for children's access – a difference that did not reach statistical significance when the analysis considered the other demographic factors simultaneously. Figure 89 shows the decreased importance assigned to adults' access by seniors compared to younger respondents.

89. Seniors see computer access for adults as less important than do younger respondents

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential

Those without home computers rated adults' access as significantly less important than did those with home computers. One in five respondents without home computers said that adults' access to computer or the Internet is not really that important or not at all important, compared to one in 20 of those with a home computer. Figure 90 shows that this effect of having a home computer is significantly stronger for men than for women.

90. Overall, respondents with home computers see access for adults as more important than respondents without home computers. This difference is smaller for women than men

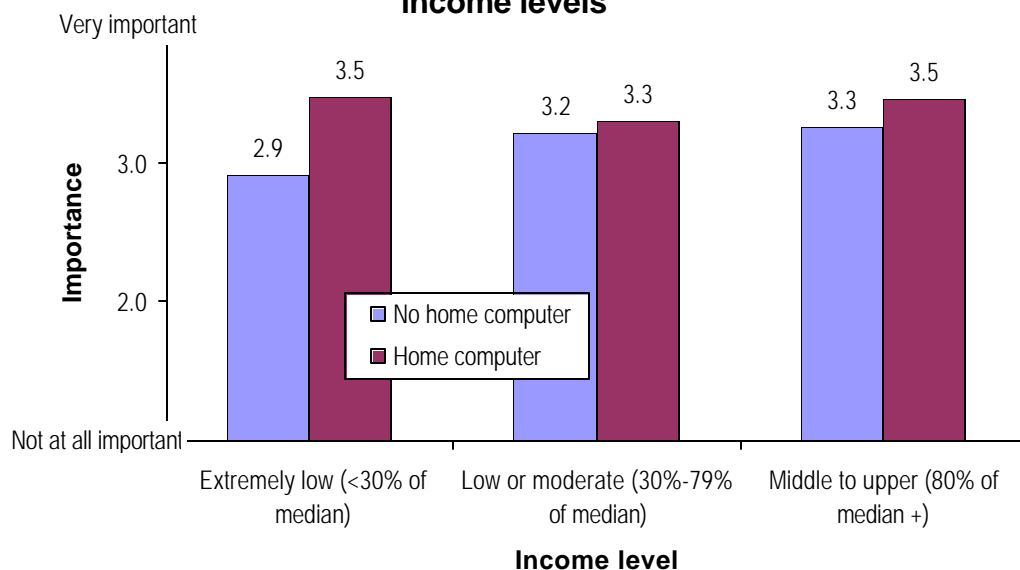Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential
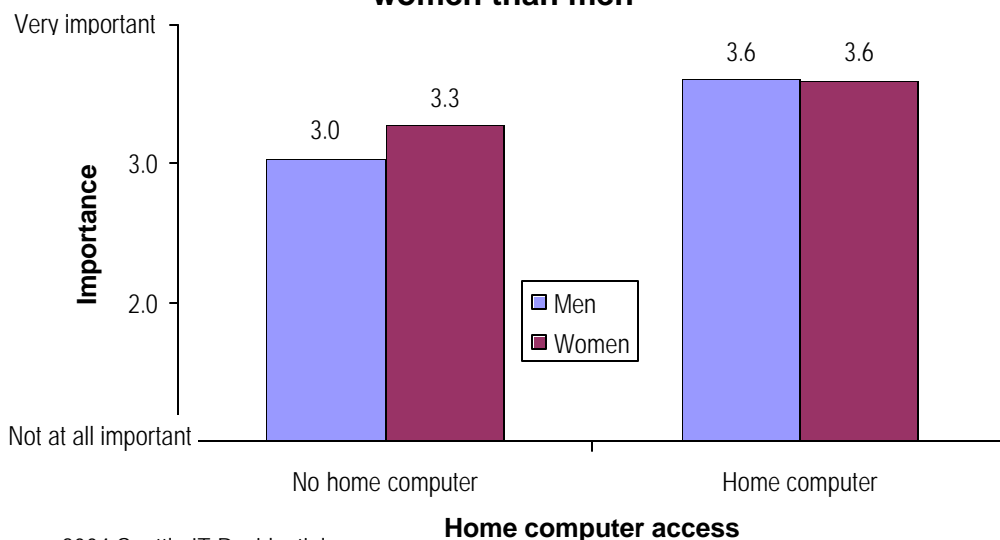
This might indicate that men who believe computer and Internet access is important for adults are more likely than women to own one, leaving disproportionately more men who don't believe they are important in the group of non computer owners, 42% of whom were men in this survey. Fifty-two percent of those *with* home computers are men.

Similarly, analysis of the importance of children's access revealed that the importance is rated more highly by those with a home computer (17% of those without a home computer say children's access is not really that important or not at all important, compared with 12% of those with a home computer). Figure 91 shows this overall result, and illustrates the interaction between income and home computer access where the difference between computer owners and non-owners is significantly greater at the lowest income level.

91. Overall, respondents with home computers see access for children as more important than respondents without home computers. This is especially true at lower income levels
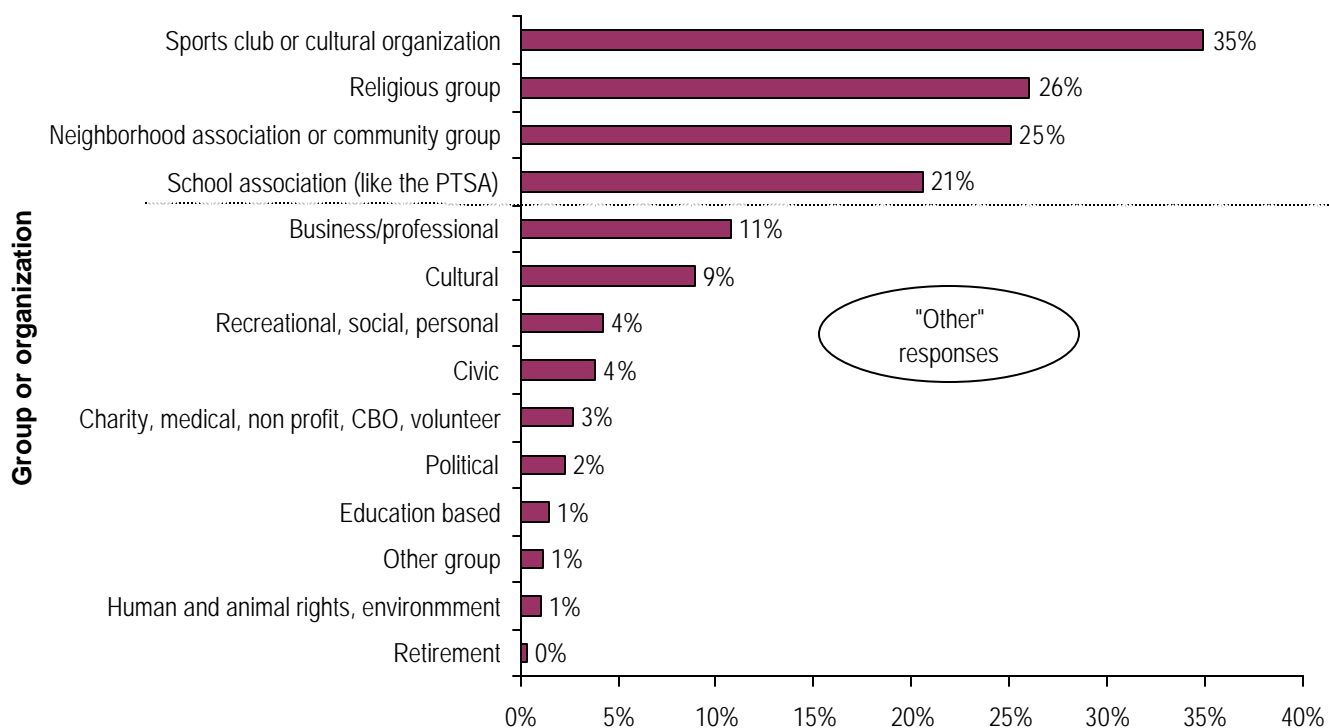

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey

Community involvement

Respondents were asked about their involvement in different groups and organizations. They were asked to indicate wither the currently participate in a neighborhood association or community group, a school association, a sports club or cultural organization, or a religious group. In addition, respondents were invited to name any other type of group they participate in. Overall, nearly three-fourths (71%) of the respondents say they belong to at least one group or organization and 42% belong to more than one. About three-fourths (77%) of these groups use Internet communication – email or a web page to communicate with their members. Figure 92 illustrates the rate of participation in each type of organization, as well as the range of other groups that were mentioned.

92. Respondents indicate that a substantial percentage participate in specific types of groups and in addition, they volunteer a wide range of other groups or organizations

| Group or organization	Percent
Sports club or cultural organization	35%
Religious group	26%
Neighborhood association or community group	25%
School association (like the PTSA)	21%
Business/professional	11%
Cultural	9%
Recreational, social, personal	4%
Civic	4%
Charity, medical, non profit, CBO, volunteer	3%
Political	2%
Education based	1%
Other group	1%
Human and animal rights, environmment	1%
Retirement	0%

"Other" responses

Percent participating in group or organization

Analysis showed that there were no demographic differences in participation in sports clubs or neighborhood associations. Seniors were least likely to participate in school associations (6%) and those between ages 36 and 50 were the most likely (31%). African American respondents were more likely to say they participate in a religious group (47%) than respondents of other ethnicities (24%). Those with more income, more education, more adults in the home, kids under 18 at home, or a home computer are more likely to participate in one or more of these groups.

Comparisons with 2000 suggest an increase in community participation (up from 62% in 2000) and an increase in the percentage of these groups using the Internet to communicate with members (73% reported that the organization uses email and 55% reported a web site).

Seattle's community organizations are largely, but not entirely, wired. Figure 93 shows the percentage of each type of group or organization that respondents say use the Internet (email or a web page) to communicate with its members. The rates range from a high of 95% for the "other" organizations, most commonly a business or professional organization, to 66% of the religious organization.

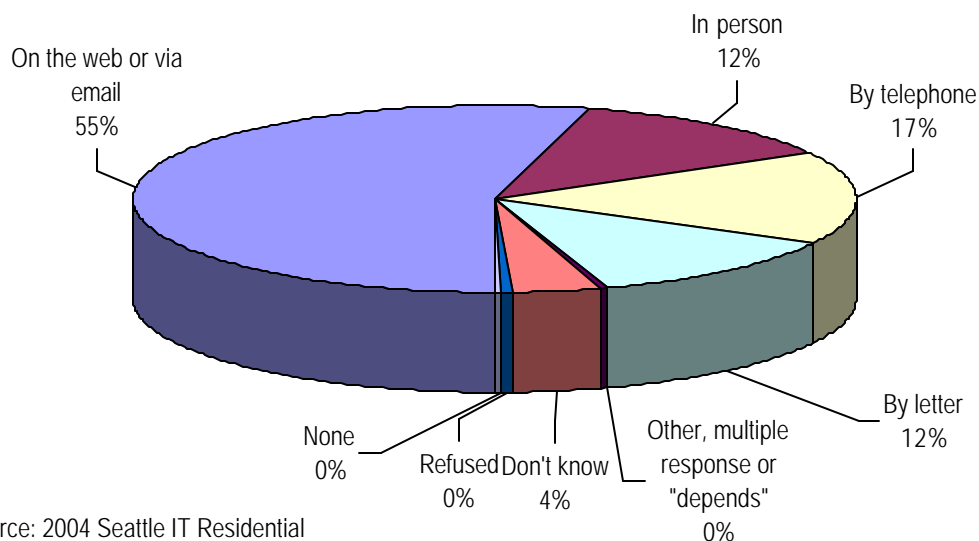**93. Many groups and organization make use of the Internet for communication with participants**

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential

Percent saying the organization used email or has a web page
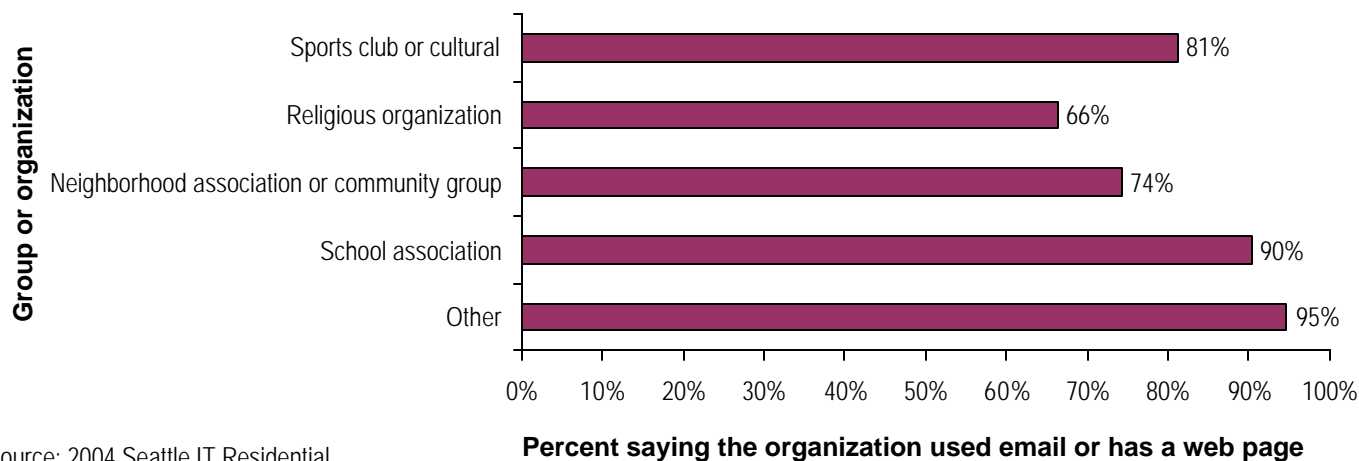
Civic Participation and e-government

Respondents were asked about their civic participation, including how they most prefer to access government services and how effective they think the Internet is as a way to communicate their opinions or to otherwise communication with government officials. Figure 94 shows that the majority of Seattleites prefer the web or email, but a sizeable minority still prefer to use the telephone (17%), a letter (12%) or to come by in person (12%).

94. Most respondents want to access government services on the web or via email. A sizeable percentage still want to be able to telephone, write or come in person.

In person
12%

By telephone
17%

On the web or via email
55%

By letter
12%

None
0%

Refused
0%

Don't know
4%

Other, multiple response or "depends"
0%

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential

Interestingly, the preferred mode of accessing services does not completely depend on the convenience of Internet access. Nearly one fourth (27%) of those *without* home Internet access said they prefer to access services on the web or via email, while about one-third of those with home Internet access preferred some lower tech mode of communication.

Several demographic differences emerged in preferred mode of accessing government services. Although preferring online access overall, African American respondents are more likely than other ethnicities to say they prefer to use written communication (19%). People who work full time were the most likely to say they prefer accessing services on the web or via email (63%) and those who are not working were more likely than other groups to say they prefer to access services in person (17%) or by mail (20%). Younger people are more likely to say they prefer to use email or the web to access services (66%) and seniors are more likely to prefer the telephone (31%) or the mail (24%). Those with more education prefer the web or email (64%), as do those with more income (68%). Although more of those with the least education prefer online access than any other single mode (38%), more in this group prefers to use the mail (23%) or to come by in person (19%) compared with other groups.

When asked how effective they think email and the Internet are as ways to communicate opinions about issues that affect them in their communities, residents were overall moderately positive. Figure 95 shows that about a quarter (24%) said they think it is a very effective way to communicate their opinions. About the same percentage (26%) gave a somewhat less positive, but still positive response. Only one in five were decidedly negative. Attitudes in 2004 were similar to those expressed by residents in 2000.

95. How effective are email and the Internet as ways to communicate your opinions about issues that affect you in your community?

(Base: All respondents)
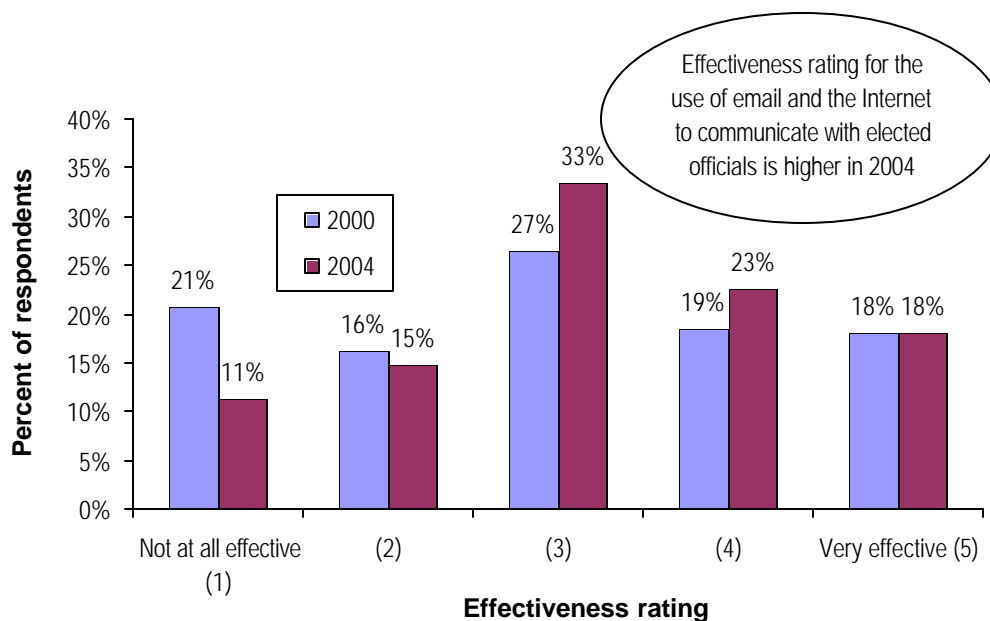Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential
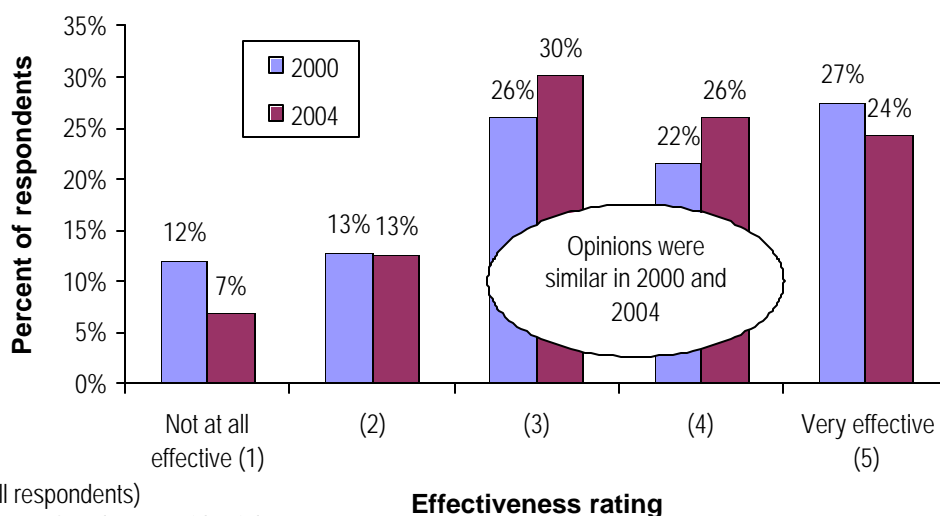
Perception of the effectiveness of the Internet to communication opinions increases with education. Four percent of those with at least a four-year college degree said they think it is not at all effective, compared with 15% of those with no more than a high school education. Eight percent of those with some college said they thought it is not at all effective as a way to communicate their opinions. Seniors are also less likely to find the Internet effective for communicating opinions about community issues. About one in five seniors (19%) said they find the Internet not at all effective for this purpose, compared with 6% of the other age groups.

When asked about the effectiveness of email and the Internet as ways to communicate with elected officials, respondents were less positive. Figure 96 shows that respondents were more positive about this use of the Internet and email in 2004 than they were in 2000 when one respondent in five said that email and the Internet is not at all effective as a way to communicate with elected official. In 2004, half that many gave that opinion. Nevertheless, even in 2004 about a quarter of the respondents (26%) gave a strongly or moderately negative response to this question, while 41% gave a strongly or moderately positive response.

Those who have used the Internet to get information from a government entity gave higher ratings for both questions.

96. How effective are email and the Internet as ways to communicate with elected officials?

Effectiveness rating for the use of email and the Internet to communicate with elected officials is higher in 2004

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey

Respondents were asked if they have used the Internet to obtain information from a city, county, state or federal government. About three respondents in five (63%) say that they have, up slightly from 60% in 2000. Several demographic differences emerged about this use of the Internet, illustrated in Figure 97.

This figure shows utilization trends similar to those reported earlier: those with more education and more income are more likely to report this use, older respondents and African American respondents are less likely. The decreased likelihood among seniors is most pronounced for senior women. Only 14% of the senior women say they have used the Internet to obtain information from a government entity, compared with three times that rate (42%) among the senior men.

97. Demographic groups differ in their use of the Internet to obtain information from a government entity

Percent saying they have obtained gov info online
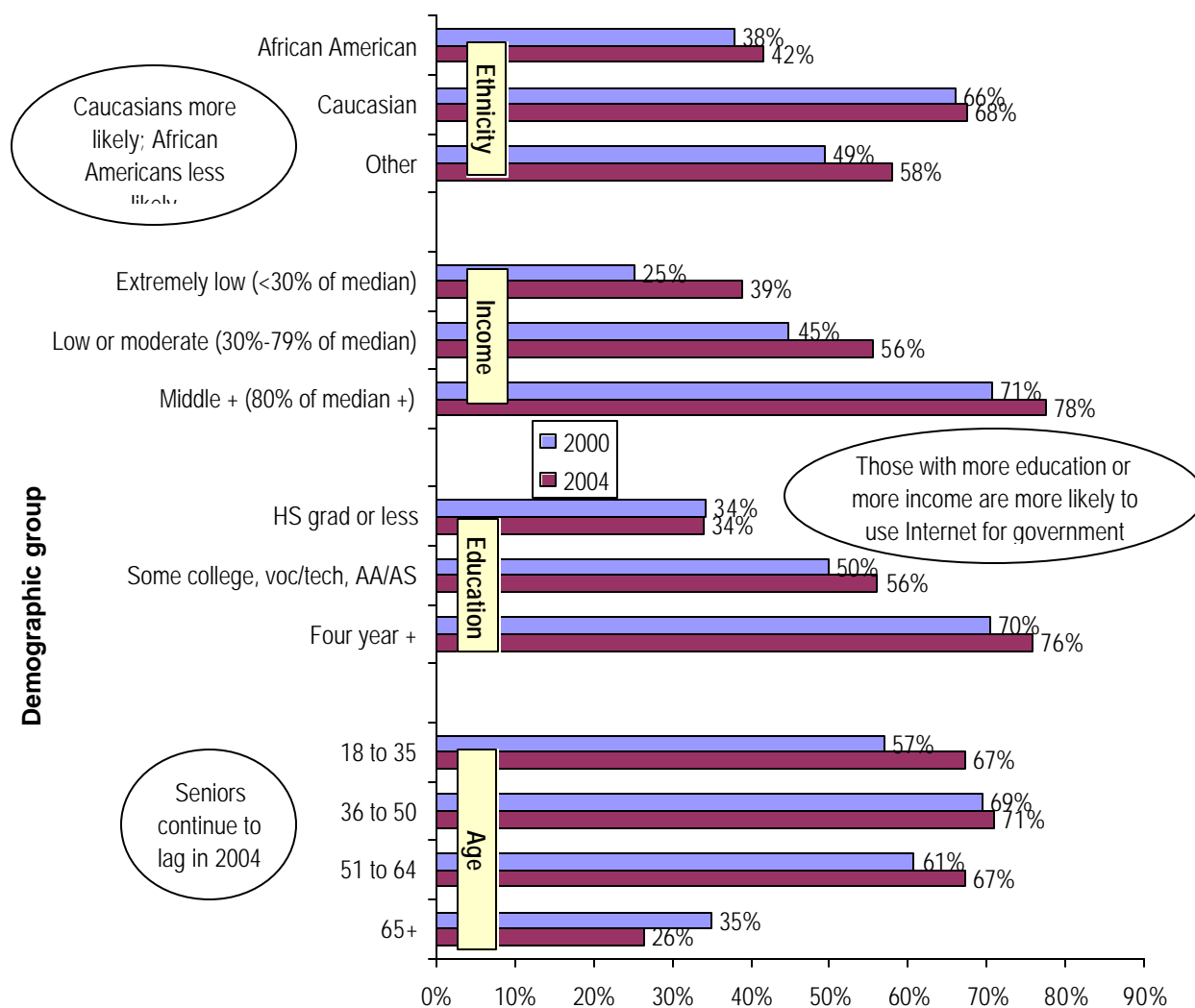
Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey

Next, respondents were asked whether they had visited the Seattle.gov web site. Half of the respondents in 2004 said that they have, up from one third of the respondents in 2000. Figure 98 shows that this increase is evident only for those under 65.

98. Significant increase since 2000 in percentage of respondents who have visited the City of Seattle website, except among oldest respondents

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey   (Base: All respondents)
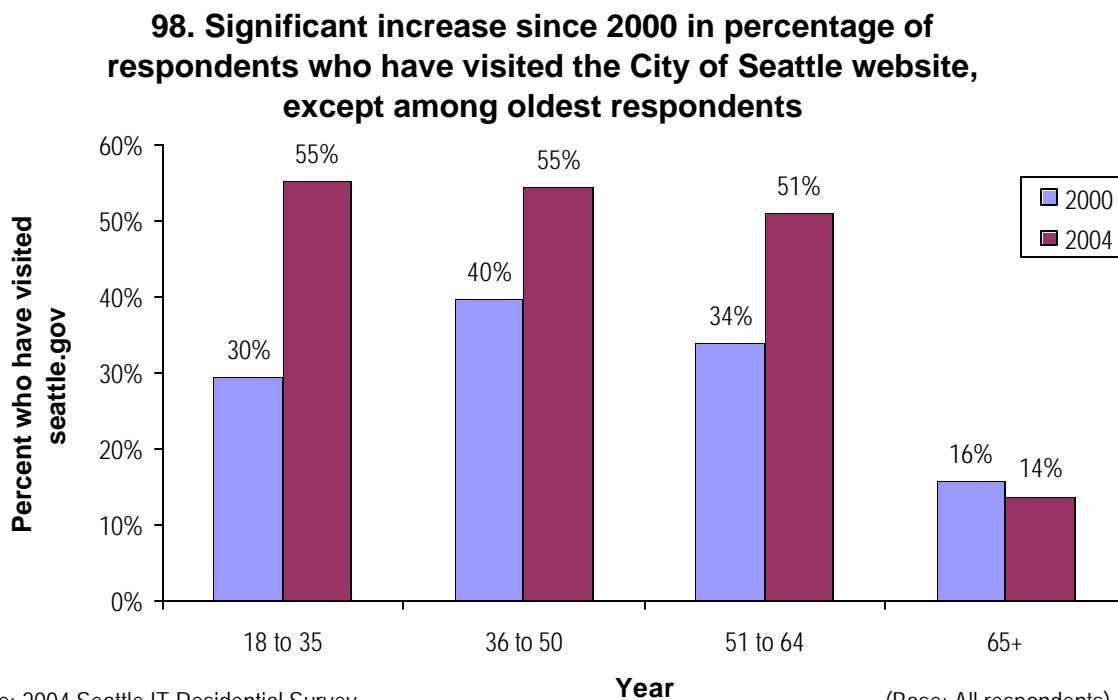
When all the demographic factors are considered simultaneously (a factorial analysis), only age and education emerge as statistically significant predictors of the use of this web site: predictably, use increases with education and decreases with age. Even though income is not statistically significant in the factorial analysis when it is analyzed alone, the familiar pattern emerges in which those with more income are more likely to use this web site. One way of understanding this apparent paradox is that after age and education have accounted for as much as they can in the use of the Seattle.gov web site, not enough is left for ethnicity or income to explain.

Respondents who had visited the Seattle.gov website were read a list of services that were or could be offered online and were asked which they would use. In addition, they were allowed to identify other services not on the list that they would like to have available online. Figure 99 summarizes the responses to these questions. Each bar represents the percentage of residents who had visited the website that said they would use the service.

99. Seattle.gov visitors want to get and give information online. Most frequently, they want to be able to find maps, check events or apply for a license or permit online

Possible Seattle.gov services

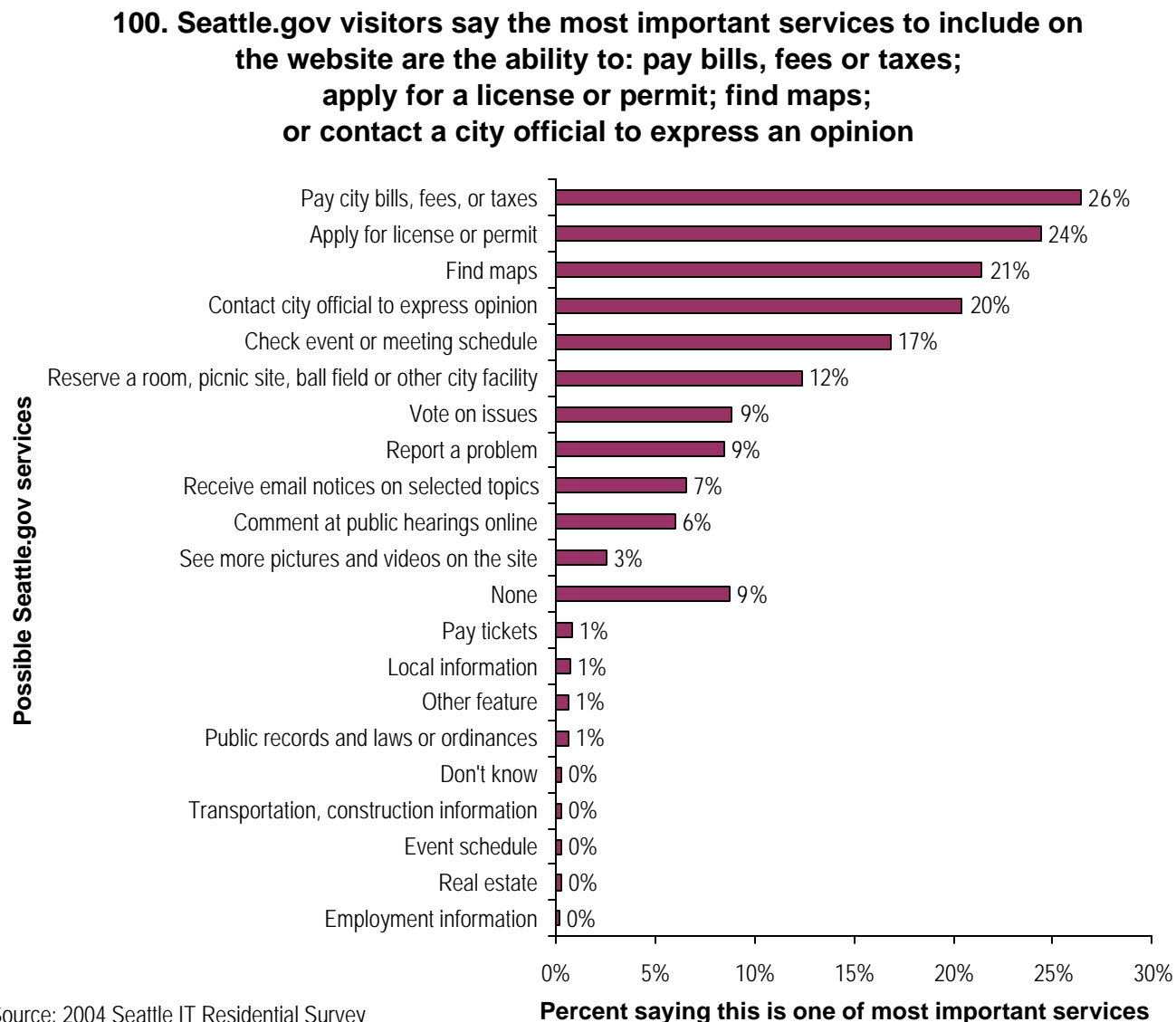| Service	Percent
Find maps	86%
Check event or meeting schedule	81%
Apply for license or permit	80%
Report a problem	70%
Receive email notices on selected topics	68%
Reserve a room, picnic site, ball field or other city facility	67%
Contact city official to express opinion	65%
Vote on issues	60%
Pay city bills, fees, or taxes	58%
See more pictures and videos on the site	49%
Comment at public hearings online	46%
Local information	1%
Transportation, construction information	1%
Event schedule	1%
Real estate	1%
Public records and laws or ordinances	1%
Employment information	1%
Pay tickets	0%
Other feature	2%
None	3%
Don't know	0%

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey

Percent saying they would use this service

There were few differences in who would select each service across demographic group. Seniors – remember, these are the seniors who have already visited the web site – were the least likely to say they'd pay city bills, fees or taxes online (11% vs. 60%). Women were more likely than men to say they'd find a map online (90% vs. 82%) and African American respondents were less likely to say they'd find a map (66% vs. 82%). African American respondents were also less likely to say they'd use the website to contact a city official to express an opinion (41% vs. 67%). In interpreting these differences, it is important to keep in mind these those who responded to these questions had already visited the Seattle.gov website, so that initial visit is not the barrier to accessing services.

Respondents were then asked to identify the one or two services that would be most important for them. Figure 100 summarizes these results.

100. Seattle.gov visitors say the most important services to include on the website are the ability to: pay bills, fees or taxes; apply for a license or permit; find maps; or contact a city official to express an opinion

Possible Seattle.gov services	Percent
Pay city bills, fees, or taxes	26%
Apply for license or permit	24%
Find maps	21%
Contact city official to express opinion	20%
Check event or meeting schedule	17%
Reserve a room, picnic site, ball field or other city facility	12%
Vote on issues	9%
Report a problem	9%
Receive email notices on selected topics	7%
Comment at public hearings online	6%
See more pictures and videos on the site	3%
None	9%
Pay tickets	1%
Local information	1%
Other feature	1%
Public records and laws or ordinances	1%
Don't know	0%
Transportation, construction information	0%
Event schedule	0%
Real estate	0%
Employment information	0%

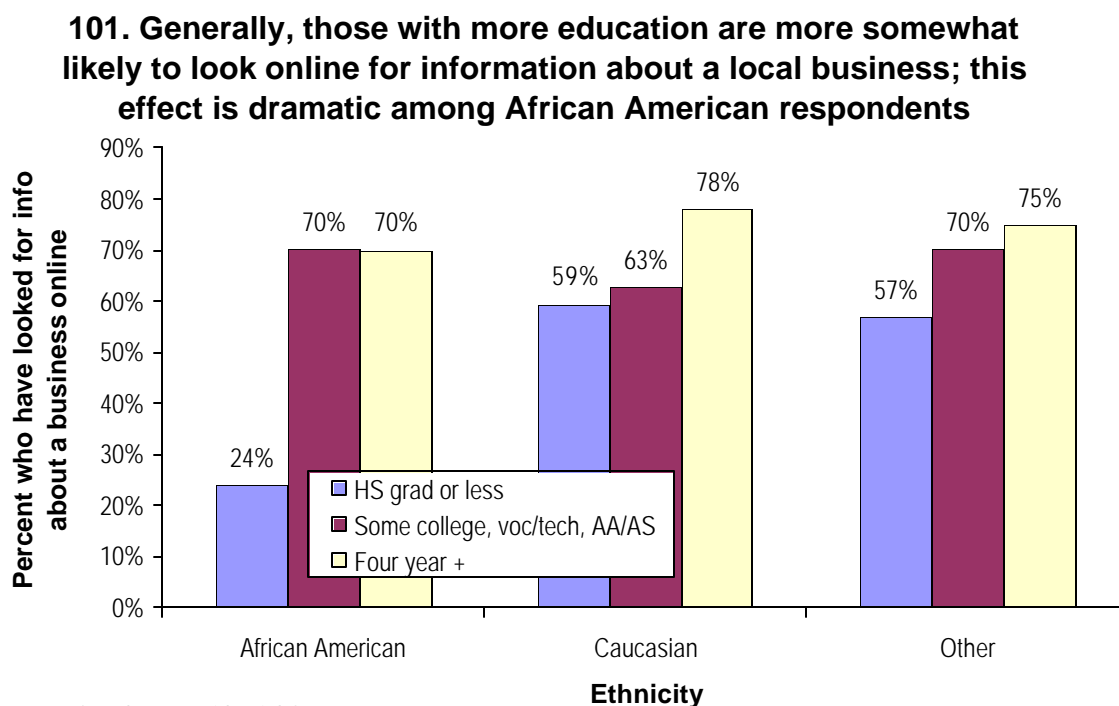**Percent saying this is one of most important services**

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey

The services identified as most important by the most Seattle.gov visitors are paying city bills, fees or taxes and applying for a license or permit. Also identified as one of the most important by at least one in five respondents is finding maps and contacting city officials to express an opinion. This, despite the earlier finding that this Internet is not overwhelmingly considered an effective way to communicate with elected officials. These responses were consistent across demographic groups of Seattle.gov visitors.

Business and economic development

Computer and Internet users were asked if they have used the Internet to sell goods or services from their home. One in five said they have, up from 8% in 2000, an increase of two and a half times. Responses were similar across demographic groups of computer users except that African American respondents reported a more modest increase, from 8% in 2000 to 10% in 2004, compared with the increase from 8% to 21% among the other respondents.

Respondents were asked if they have tried to find information about local businesses on the Internet. Seven out of ten respondents (71%) said they had, up significantly from 61% in 2000. Men are more likely to do this than women (75% vs. 67%) and seniors are least likely (38% vs. 74%). Figure 101 illustrates the interaction between education and ethnicity on the likelihood of finding information about local businesses online.

101. Generally, those with more education are more somewhat likely to look online for information about a local business; this effect is dramatic among African American respondents
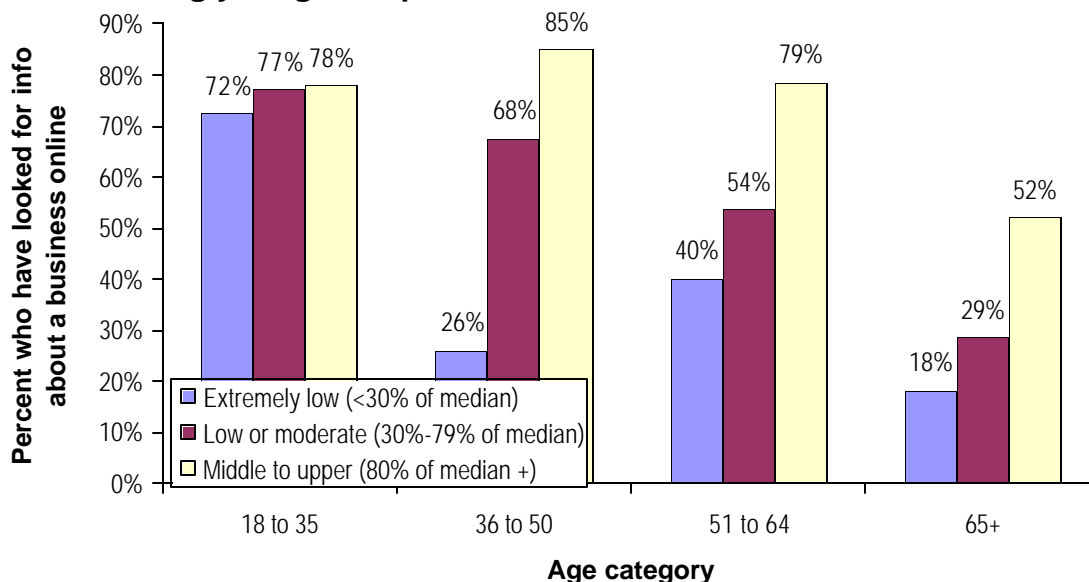

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey

Overall, those with more education are more likely to have looked for information about local businesses online, an effect that is particularly strong among African American respondents.

Figure 102 shows the interaction between age and income in looking for information online about local businesses. This figure shows that among the youngest respondents, income is not related to the practice of using the Internet to find this information. This may suggest a cultural shift so that younger Seattleites see the Internet as a publicly useful resources, perhaps like the telephone directory.
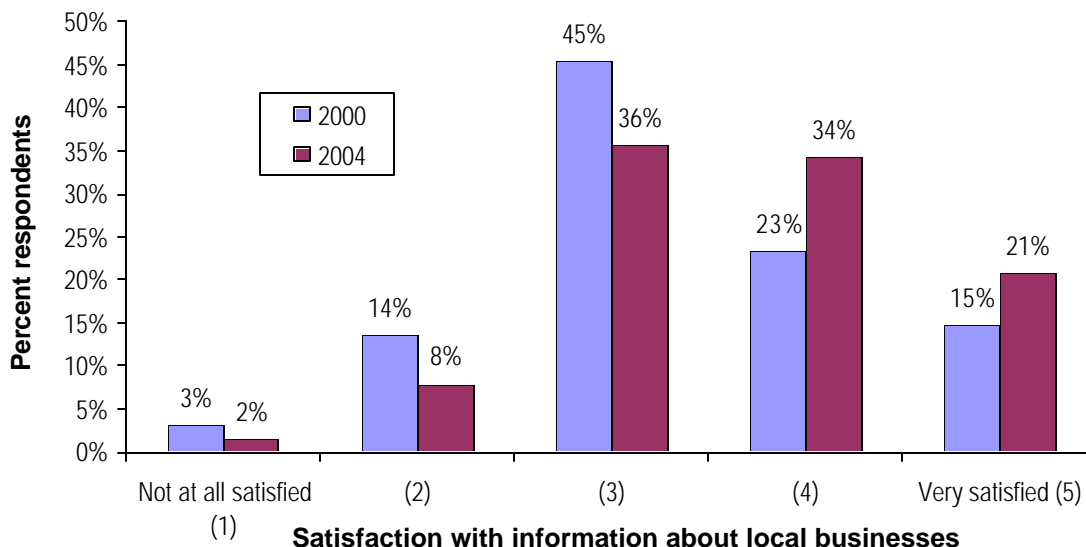
102. Generally, as income increases, so does the likelihood of looking online for information on a local business, except among younger respondents where income is unrelated

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey

Those who said they have used the Internet to find information about local businesses were asked how satisfied they have been with the information they were able to find. Figure 103 show that respondents are more satisfied than not, and that the satisfaction of the 2004 respondents is significantly higher than that of the 2000 respondents, suggesting an improvement in the quality of local business' websites since 2000.

103. Improved online information for local businesses: 2004 respondents are more satisfied with online information about local businesses than 2000 respondents

Source: 2004 Seattle IT Residential Survey